

Memorandum To: The Board of Selectmen  
The Comprehensive Long Range Planning Committee

Date: April 1, 2003

From: Sally Schnitzer

I have served on the Route 2 Corridor Advisory Committee for almost 10 years, first as the Planning Board representative, and more recently as the Selectmen's representative. I also served on the Town's Route 2 Committee in the early 90's.

The town's interest in improvements to Route 2 goes back many decades. Prior to my own involvement, other Selectmen such as Judy Walpole, Bill Sullivan, Elliott Wilbur, and Annabelle Shepherd carried the flag for Concord on this issue. Because the pace of change on the Route 2 issue is glacial, it is easy to think that little or no progress has been made. In fact, quite substantial progress has been made toward a consensus on Route 2 improvements, on lining up funding for safety improvements, and in actually accomplishing certain construction objectives. Over the next five years, we should see even more accomplished "on the ground" if we keep pressing for funding and authorization of projects.

I have been asked by members of the Board of Selectmen and the Comprehensive Long Range Plan Committee to provide a summary of the status of Route 2 issues. I agreed that it would be useful at this juncture to summarize the work of the last decade or so, and to outline the principles we have fought for and the consensus we have won.

#### **BACKGROUND**

It is not my intent to write a detailed history of Route 2, although it would make for a fascinating story. Route 2 was built in the 1930's as a bypass around Concord Center and as part of an east-west route from Boston to North Adams in western Massachusetts. By the 1970's, the road was substantially as it presently exists: a four lane, undivided highway with increasing traffic loads. The State in the 1970's proposed major highway reconstruction that would have realigned Route 2 and would have eliminated several Concord access points. The road would have become a four lane, divided highway, much like Route 128 and Route 495 were at that time.

The Towns of Concord and Lincoln vigorously objected to aspects of the Route 2 proposals, and fought with one another over the optimal solutions. Ultimately, the proposals died. In the 1980's, the debate over Route 2 shifted slightly, reemerging as a topic of regional concern when the communities of Lexington, Concord, Lincoln, and Concord formed the Hanscom Area Transportation Study. Regional cooperation among

the four towns opened new channels of communications and helped the communities see their common needs and work toward common solutions.

In 1993, Elliott Wilbur wrote:

*"Route 2 has long been an asset and a liability to the Town of Concord. It is a vital link to the Boston area, and it manages much of the eastward traffic coming through Concord from the West, but it divides the Town in half, its overflow creates local traffic problems, and it is environmentally unfriendly from the point of view of noise, pollution, and safety." He goes on to say: "The State has, for years, been trying to improve this situation, hampered by local interests, a geometrically growing traffic load on the highway, no apparent "perfect solution" and limited State funds. It is currently in a design phase, seeking appropriate and locally acceptable solutions, both for the short term (1-10 years) and for the long term (greater than 10 years). The Town of Concord has also been seeking solutions, through actions such as its creation of a Route 2 Task Force, some years ago. The final report of this effort, published in late 1990, has been most helpful in ...(guiding the Town)."*

#### **CONCORD'S ROUTE 2 COMMITTEE 1990 – 1991**

The Route 2 Task force referenced above was created in March of 1990 and submitted its final report in April of 1991 (attached). Serving on the Committee were: Annabelle Shepherd, Nat Arena, Cliff Krauss, Dorie Bonner, Scott McCandless, Dan Brand, and Glenn Smith. In the Introduction to this report, the committee states:

*"The status of Route 2 is a major issue for the Town of Concord. The highway and its traffic conditions affect the lives and livelihood of a majority of citizens in town. It is by far the most important transportation link in town. It is a major travel route for our own residents, for citizens of neighboring towns, and for visitors from outside the region. At the same time, it is a major threat to the health and safety of those who use it."*

The report was broken into three sections and an appendix. The second section was an enumeration of the twelve general issues of concern to Concord and its residents. The final section was a list of proposed conceptual improvements to the highway.

The twelve issues of concern were remarkably cogent, and have largely guided the actions of Town officials for the last decade. These are:

1. *Safety – reduce potential for accidents, particularly those that result in death or personal injury. This can be accomplished in part, by providing a median barrier for the length of Route 2 within the Concord town limits.*
2. *Traffic capacity – increase the capacity of Route 2 to meet peak traffic demands, but not by transferring existing traffic congestion problems to the local street system.*

3. *Keep Through Traffic on Route 2 – avoid changes that encourage the use of local streets by commuters passing through Concord.*
4. *Minimize Barrier Effects – remove both physical and psychological barrier conditions associated with Route 2, and restore means for safe passage across its corridor.*
5. *Reduce present access points to Route 2 where hazardous points are identified – e.g. Assabet Avenue and Elm Place.*
6. *Maintain priority access to Emerson hospital –provide controllable signals at the Old Road to Nine Acre Corner intersection.*
7. *Preserve access to existing businesses and institutions – provide sound functional means for reaching activities served by the highway.*
8. *Prevent new access to Route 2 -- preclude the development of new driveways to service new activity in the Route 2 corridor.*
9. *Devise a low impact takings program – to the extent possible, give the abutters from whom takings are necessary, the choice of selling all or part of their property at fair market value. Emerson Hospital is particularly sensitive to takings from its parking area.*
10. *Minimize environmental impacts to abutters – consider in particular noise, sensitive natural resources, and aesthetic impact. Where at all possible, Route 2 should be depressed as the lower of the roadways at grade separated crossings.*
11. *Provide interim improvements now – optimize timing of existing signals, provide low cost improvements such as lane markings and improved signage as soon as possible.*
12. *Ensure an efficient, enforceable construction management plan – do not allow construction that unreasonably obstructs the corridor (...).*

The Committee detailed a number of short term and longer term improvements that would enhance the safety and capacity of Route 2 while enhancing the goals above. Most of the short term improvements have been considered, and either implemented or rejected by MassHighway during the 1990's (see below). Under "Longer Term Improvements", the highest and urgent priority was given to grade separated intersections at Crosby Corner and the Concord Rotary in order to provide both safety and capacity improvements. They also called for the provision of a center barrier and breakdown shoulders for the entire length of the highway, to be implemented as soon as possible.

Other Longer Term Improvements included work at each of the signalized intersections, including a design of a grade separated interchange at Route 126, study of a possible grade separated interchange at Sudbury Road, and study of a combined intersection at Route 62 and Old Road to Nine Acre Corner. Additional recommendations included work on acceleration lanes at Sandy Pond Road and the DPW yard at Crosby Corner, restricting movements at the State Police and Prison, and addressing issues at Assabet Avenue.

### **CREATION OF THE ROUTE 2 CORRIDOR ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC)**

It became clear to the Selectmen that the State would address issues along the Route 2 Corridor only if the towns of Acton, Concord, and Lincoln could resolve their differences, and work cooperatively toward acceptable solutions. Acting on the groundwork that had been laid by HATS, representatives of Acton, Concord, and Lincoln came together in 1994 to form the Route 2 Corridor Advisory Committee (CAC). Following a number of conversations among the Boards of Selectmen, in November of 1994 representatives of the three towns signed an agreement to work "cooperatively and productively" with the State Bureau of Transportation Planning and Development "through the Route 2 Corridor Advisory Committee." A Statement of Purpose and Agreement identified the mission of the CAC:

*"The mission of the Route 2 CAC is to bring about short term and long term improvements to Route 2 that improve safety, increase the efficiency of traffic movement, and maintain appropriate local circulation. Our top regional priorities are Crosby's Corner and the Concord Rotary, in that order. Local priorities will be determined by each Town, and one Town will not take any action that dictates or contradicts another town's local priorities."*

In the same document (attached), the three towns agreed on 11 points. Among them were the following:

- (4) *...improvements (will) be accomplished in segments so that we can gain funding for them in each annual Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)*
- (5) *The three towns will...(...) send one message to the State*
- (6) *The CAC and the three Towns will not support additional travel lanes on the mainline of the Route 2 Corridor.*
- (7) *It is the intent of the CAC to seek improvements that maintain the existing rural and scenic character of Route 2.*
- (8) *Cooperation and negotiation among our Town's CAC members... should bring about more timely attention to Route 2 improvements by enhancing our abilities to influence state decision making and receive priority for planning, engineering, and construction funds.*

The Agreement also laid out the framework for the Committee, including quarterly meetings, the membership, and the following:

*This statement of purpose and agreement will serve as a guide for our participation in the Route 2 CAC in recognition of the importance of Route 2*

*improvements to our citizens, and the fact that our cooperation is essential to achievement of this goal.*

Aided by the considerable commitment and leadership of Mr. Daniel Beagan, Director of Planning at the Bureau of Transportation, and later, Mr. Kenneth Miller, Director of Planning at Central Transportation Planning Staff, the Route 2 CAC began to meet quarterly with representatives of the Massachusetts Highway Department (MHD), the Bureau of Transportation Planning and Development (BTP&D) and the Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS). Other agencies, such as Mass State Police and the Department of Corrections joined the group. State Representatives Pamela Resor, Jay Kaufman, and Cory Atkins as well as State Senators Susan Fargo and Pamela Resor attended some of the meetings.

The CAC worked its way through an ambitious agenda. Over the nearly nine years since its incorporation, the three Towns have attempted to speak with a united voice regarding Route 2 matters, and have collectively requested MHD to fund short term and major long term improvements along the route 2 corridor, and to consider various studies, including transportation modeling, and conceptual intersection planning. The results of the cooperative dialogue include the following.

#### **PROGRESS TO DATE (1990-2003)**

**Short term improvements.** All of the following were proposed in the 1991 study and have been implemented:

1. Several intensive studies have been undertaken to look at conditions along Route 2 and to recommend short term solutions, including a 1993 Analysis of Traffic Operations of the Rotary, which studied whether signalization could relieve conditions there on a short term basis.
2. Signal timing has been studied and improved at most of the intersections.
3. New "opticon" technology has been installed to allow emergency vehicles to override local signals.
4. Turning lanes have been added at a number of the Route 2 crossings.
5. Signage and lane markings have been improved.
6. Left turns have been prohibited at several intersections.
7. Yield signs at the Rotary were installed, which have ironically led to greater traffic delays on Route 2 and Route 2A but which appear to help the traffic flow and traffic safety in the Rotary itself.
8. Bridge repairs have been completed over the two B&M railroad crossings, and with those repairs have come additional median barriers in several segments.
9. The signage, crosswalks, and signal timing at pedestrian crossings have been addressed, although accidents still occur at these hazardous crossings.

10. Coordination between the Concord police department, State Police, and MassHighway crews has greatly improved, with protocols in place to respond to emergency situations, such as loss of power to signals.

### **Selection of and Planning for Longer Term Highway Improvements**

Progress has been made toward implementation of many of the longer term proposals identified in the 1991 document, including design work for Crosby's Corner which incorporate improvements at Sandy Pond Road and the DPW site, conceptual design planning for the Rotary which will deal with access issues for Mass State Police and MCI Concord, final design for the relocation of Assabet Avenue (by the Town of Concord), and final design for the provision of a center median barrier and breakdown lanes on two major sections of the highway. During the same time frame, the CAC considered and rejected a number of proposals for access improvements in Acton. Thus far, improvements at the intersections with Route 126, Sudbury Road, Nine Acre Corner, and/or Route 62 have not been addressed.

The planning process for longer term improvements is a daunting one, requiring a continuing round of State applications, approvals, studies, environmental studies, public hearings, contracts to consultants, transportation modeling, coordination with State and Federal agencies, and more. Between 1994 and 2003, the CAC has adhered to its basic principles in advocating for the following longer term improvements, principles, and initiatives, which are now at various stages of planning.

1. Crosby's Corner safety improvements
2. Concord Rotary safety improvements
3. Median barriers and breakdown lanes throughout
4. Highway access issues:
  - a. prevention of additional curb cuts,
  - b. elimination of existing curb cuts, including driveways and streets
  - c. ensure status as limited access highway
5. Signalization improvements
6. "Parkway" treatments which are consistent with the rural character and historic heritage of the Town
7. Attention to surrounding land use, particularly the fate of State-owned land
8. Addressing pedestrian, wildlife, and bicycle crossing concerns
9. Treatment of the remaining signalized intersections: grade separations, jughandles, pedestrian crossings, closures, etc.

## STATUS AND OBJECTIVES AS OF SPRING 2003

### 1. CROSBY'S CORNER SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS

**Description.** Crosby's Corner is the intersection of Route 2, ByPass Road, and the Cambridge Turnpike at the Lincoln/Concord town line. The Crosby's Corner project segment extends from Tracey's Garage in Lincoln to Sandy Pond Road in Concord. The existing roadway in this segment has two travel lanes in each direction separated by a double yellow centerline.

The Crosby's Corner segment has consistently presented safety problems to its travelers. Among the most serious accidents are head on collisions on the undivided travel lanes. Numerous driveways and secondary roads have egress directly onto Route 2, particularly in the Lincoln stretch, causing dangerous turning movements.

At the Corner itself, the geometric deficiencies that contribute to the large number of accidents include a combination of topography, skewed approaches, a high volume of turning movements, and the existing traffic signal. This traffic signal is located at the base of a 6% downgrade, one of the most significant contributing factors to accidents at the Corner. Accident statistics for the period 1991-1994 show that out of a four year total of 138 accidents, 42% were rear-end collisions on the westbound downgrade approach to the traffic signal. Furthermore, 32% of these rear end collisions involved three or more vehicles. Another dangerous factor at this intersection is the treacherous merge for traffic entering Route 2 through the light from Cambridge Turnpike. Traffic receives the green light to enter the intersection, then immediately encounters an unexpected merger with fast-moving Route 2 through- traffic coming around the corner.

**Proposed Project.** The proposed design concept for the Crosby's Corner project was selected during the development of a Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Assessment which included substantial public input. Commitments were made to incorporate specific "Parkway" treatments into the final design of the highway, including landscaping, treatment of bridges, walls, and abutments, wildlife mitigation, and other design elements.

Traffic improvements for Crosby's Corner have now reached the 25% Design Phase. The project will consist of a diamond interchange at the Lincoln/Concord Town line that will allow Route 2 mainline traffic to flow freely. Route 2 from Bedford Street in Lincoln to Sandy Pond Road in Concord will have two travel lanes in each direction with a concrete median barrier separating the directions of travel. Each barrel will have 11.75 meters of pavement consisting of two 3.75 meter travel lanes, a 2.5 meter right shoulder, plus a .5 meter offset and a .75 meter left shoulder with a .5 meter offset. The downgrade of Route 2 will be ameliorated. All direct private driveway

and secondary road access onto Route 2 will be eliminated in the project segment, and MassHighway has committed to making the segment a limited access highway thus eliminating future curb cuts.

The diamond interchange will provide access to Concord via Cambridge Turnpike or Bypass Road, and access to Lincoln via a service road. There will be two signalized intersections at the bottoms of the ramps. Several new local roads will be constructed in Lincoln.

**Schedule:** The 25% Design Public Hearing will be held in Lincoln in May of 2003. There will be a 10 day public comment period after the hearing. At the Public Hearing, we expect the State to demonstrate its commitment to the promised mitigation and parkway treatments, address remaining design details and modifications, and provide a series of highway cross sections and landscaping conceptual plans.

Following the 25% Design Public Hearing, a new contract will be scoped and advertised by MassHighway, which will lead to the 100% Design, probably by June of 2006. During 2005, the State anticipates beginning the required property takings. Following the completion of the 100% Design Plans, the project will be advertised for construction, which might commence in 2007.

**Concord Priorities:**

1. Continue to press for timely progress on all bidding, contracts, and schedules.
2. During Right of Way process, guarantee a no-access line on all Rights of Way, and take any other steps to ensure that the new road is in fact designated Limited Access (no future curb cuts).
3. Stay on top of the TIP process, to make sure the project maintains its place in line for funding.
4. Press for State funds for the Crosby's Corner project
5. Remain engaged in details of design, as the project moves from 25% to 100% design. We are particularly interested in the successful integration of landscaping elements and parkway design, wildlife mitigation tunnels, the Sandy Pond Road intersection, integration of pedestrian and bicycle access through the interchange
6. Ensure that Concord Police Department, Fire Department, and Concord Public Works are engaged with the State to plan for optimal traffic management during construction.
7. The Town should pursue any opportunity to acquire any of the State-owned land around Crosby's Pond or the present MassDPW site.

## **2. CONCORD ROTARY SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS**

**Description.** The Route 2 Rotary is the intersection of Route 2, Route 2A, Commonwealth Avenue, and Barrett's Mill Road in Concord near the Concord/Acton



Town line. The Rotary is abutted by significant State-owned property, including major holdings of the Commonwealth's Department of Corrections.

In 1999, the CAC requested a feasibility study to analyze the traffic and other impacts of various alternative improvements at the Concord Rotary in Concord and other locations along Route 2 in Acton. The study segment extends from the Baker Avenue/Elm Street traffic signal (near Paparazzi Restaurant) in Concord to Route 27 in Acton. The study examined traffic issues along Route 2 and local roads in Acton and Concord, analyzed numerous improvement alternatives, and ultimately identified three preferred design alternatives for grade separation of the Concord Rotary. The improvements aim at mitigating the traffic congestion along Route 2 and segments of local roads in the study area, and enhancing traffic safety.

The major issues with the Concord Rotary segment are congestion and delay along Route 2, cut-through traffic on local roads due to that congestion, accidents in the Rotary, safety issues at the Piper/Taylor intersection in Acton, and access issues in Acton. Head-on traffic accidents in the undivided portions of Route 2 east and west of the Rotary are major concerns.

The Rotary is an outdated traffic solution. Congestion and a high incidence of motor vehicle crashes result from high Route 2 and 2A traffic volumes, unbalanced traffic flows at the rotary, and the size of the rotary itself relative to the traffic and traffic movements.

The Rotary project offers an opportunity to address pedestrian, bicycle, and wildlife crossing issues. Commerford Road neighbors have long been interested in a better connection to West Concord, as have neighborhoods along Barrett's Mill Road. Bike Trail enthusiasts are eager to see the abandoned rail bed used as a Rails to Trails bike route.

The objectives of traffic improvements at the Rotary are: to reduce accidents, to reduce traffic congestion on Route 2 and local roads, to improve pedestrian circulation and safety, to reduce delays on Route 2 and local roads, to reduce cut through traffic on local roads, to improve local access and emergency access to and across Route 2, and to provide safer access for the Mass State Police and Mass Corrections.

There are a number of Right of Way and environmental constraints at the Rotary, including: an historic cemetery, wetland areas, farmland, properties of historic importance, access to commercial property and residences, and publicly owned land.

**Toward a Preferred Alternative.** Working with the Commonwealth's Central Transportation Planning Staff, the CAC reviewed a number of design alternatives. There were seven design alternatives for the Concord Rotary alone. In addition, five alternative packages of improvements for intersections in Acton were evaluated. The

packages included various possible combinations of grade separations, collector/distributor roads, cul-de-sacs, and other features at various Acton crossings.

All of the roadway improvement measures under consideration were rated according to evaluation criteria in a report produced by the Central Transportation Planning Staff for MassHighway in February of 2003. The anticipated benefits and impacts of each were described. Two public meetings were held to discuss the alternatives, one in Acton and one in Concord. Input was received from the Acton and Concord Boards of Selectmen, as well as Town Committees and many individuals.

At the end of this process, three design alternatives for the Concord Rotary were identified for further analysis, while the remaining were eliminated. They were:

Alternative 3 – Diamond Interchange

Alternative 5 – Partial Cloverleaf Interchange with Diamond Ramps on the North side

Alternative 7 – Modified Partial Cloverleaf Interchange.

In March of 2003, MassHighway began the environmental review analysis of the three alternatives, beginning with the preparation of an Environmental Notification Form and the ENF scoping meeting attended by Town officials and residents.

#### **Concord Priorities.**

As the Rotary project moves forward, Concord's priorities will include the following:

1. Continue to press for timely progress on all bidding, contracts, and schedules.
2. Ensure that planning for the Rotary includes consideration of issues at Baker Avenue as well.
3. Keep in mind the fundamental mission of the traffic improvements, namely to improve safety, increase the efficiency of traffic movement, and maintain appropriate local circulation.
4. Safe and efficient access to Route 2 for the Prison and the State Police will require careful planning.
5. The Prison is interested in improving the layout of its campus as the Rotary plans develop. The Town should be attentive to these deliberations to protect the Town's interests, including review of Prison-Town agreements.
6. The project should incorporate pedestrian, bicycle, and wildlife crossings into the design at an early stage of the planning. Wildlife corridors should be identified, neighborhood linkages addressed, and funding for these items included in the project.
7. The project should provide ample buffers and protections for all wetlands and waterways, minimization of construction impacts to the Assabet River corridor, protection of Warner's Pond and environs, establishment of ample setbacks to existing woodlands, preservation of existing fields and productive agricultural lands, preservation of existing street trees, and preservation of existing wooded buffers to surrounding neighborhoods and the Concord municipal light Plant.
8. The project should preserve and protect historic resources.

9. The Town will have issues with respect to Town road relocations, road takings, and supporting infrastructure.
10. The construction management plans will be important to keep traffic moving during construction. Ensure that Concord Police Department, Fire Department, and Concord Public Works are engaged with the State to plan for optimal traffic management during construction.
11. Stay on top of the TIP process, to make sure the project maintains its place in line for funding.
12. During Right of Way process, guarantee a no-access line on all Rights of Way, and take any other steps to ensure that the new road is in fact designated Limited Access (no future curb cuts).
13. Surrounding Land Use. The Town should take advantage of any opportunity to acquire and/or influence the future of State-owned land in the Rotary area.

### **3. MEDIAN BARRIER PROJECT**

The Number One recommendation of the 1991 Route 2 report was:

*Safety -- reduce potential for accidents, particularly those that result in death or personal injury. This can be accomplished in part, by providing a median barrier for the length of Route 2 within the Concord town limits.*

Since 1991, several small sections of median barriers and breakdown lanes have been installed in conjunction with bridge repair work over the railroad tracks near Arena Farms and near Concord Greene.

When the Crosby's Corner and Rotary projects are completed, two more major segments of the presently undivided Route 2 will gain median barriers and breakdown lanes. In the case of Crosby's Corner, median barriers will be installed from Bedford Street in Lincoln to Sandy Pond Road in Concord. In the case of the Rotary Project, median barriers are expected between Baker Avenue in Concord and the Acton Town Line.

MassHighway has made it clear to Town officials that median barrier improvements in these two segments will be done only in conjunction with the grade separation and safety improvement projects. In the case of Crosby's Corner, median barriers can be expected in four or five years. In the case of the Rotary it will be longer. Thus far, MassHighway has not been interested in pursuing "temporary" median barriers, because in their opinion the highway is too narrow to safely accommodate them.

In 1998 the Town of Concord and the CAC urged MassHighway to move forward on providing median barriers in two undivided segments of Route 2 that are not part of the Crosby's Corner or Rotary projects. MassHighway placed these two projects on its "urgent" list and has moved forward with design plans and funding.

The first segment is between Sandy Pond Road and Route 126. The second segment is between Sudbury Road and the Sudbury River.

Because of the significance of floodplain, wetland, open space, and wildlife issues in these two segments, MassHighway has worked closely and productively with Concord's Natural Resources Department to minimize and mitigate the environmental impacts. Several wildlife tunnels will be provided as part of the project and will be monitored to determine their effectiveness in facilitating wildlife movement.

#### **Status of Project.**

The Concord Median Barrier Project is presently on target for advertising in August of 2003. Funds have been included on the 2003 TIP. The environmental permit is expected in April of 2003, with 75%/100% plans due concurrently. As of March 2003, field borings are being completed and right of way planning is underway with Keyspan, which has a major gas conduit in the segment near Emerson Hospital. While Concord officials are still pressing to see construction start in the fall of 2003, it is more likely that construction will begin in the spring of 2004.

#### **4. HIGHWAY ACCESS ISSUES**

In both the towns of Lincoln and Concord there are presently major issues with respect to driveway, farmstand, and secondary road access directly onto Route 2. Both Towns, with the support of the Town of Acton and the CAC, have pressed for highway safety improvements that will

- a. eliminate existing curb cuts, driveways, secondary roads
- b. prohibit additional curb cuts, driveways, and secondary roads
- c. designate Route 2 as a limited access highway into the future.

It has been frustrating to both Towns that MassHighway has recently issued new curbcut permits along Route 2 (near the Lawton's farmstand in Lincoln, and for the once-proposed Next Generation Day Care Center near Sudbury Road in Concord) despite the opposition of the CAC, and the Towns. The reason MassHighway cannot prevent access is that, in their opinion, prohibition of access could constitute a "taking" of property rights.

Once the Crosby's Corner segment is completed, MassHighway will have acquired, through its Right of Way Division, fee or partial interest in the properties along that portion of Route 2. At that point, the highway will become "limited access" in that portion only. This will resolve the issue for the Town of Lincoln.

In Concord, the solution will be more elusive. There are already a number of access driveways (mostly from farmstands), and two residential streets (Assabet Avenue and Fairhaven Road). Near the Rotary, driveways from MCI Concord and the State Police Barracks lead to hazardous turning movements. Elimination of these several points of access will lead to safer conditions on Route 2.

The Town of Concord and the Commonwealth have made enormous progress towards the elimination of one of the most dangerous residential street/Route 2 intersections: Assabet Avenue. The Assabet Avenue relocation is presently anticipated during the 2003 construction season following two Town Meeting votes, successful negotiations for easements across land owned by the MassHighway and Mass State Police, extensive work with neighboring residents over the design and landscaping elements of the plan, and authorization of funds by Town Meeting and the Commonwealth. Assabet Avenue will be closed off at its present intersection and extended northward to a new intersection with Barrett's Mill Road.

Elsewhere along Route 2, it has been assumed that properties owned by the Commonwealth, the Town, the Concord Land Conservation Trust, and/or Walden Woods are all unlikely to require new curb cuts. Many more privately owned parcels with frontage on Route 2 are able to be successfully accessed from other town roads. But owners of some privately held parcels may at some point request direct access to Route 2. In anticipation of this, the Town should do what it can to protect Route 2 from new driveway access.

1. In light of the Commonwealth's newer policy to surplus and sell its properties, the Town should in every case press State officials to place Right of Way easements on any lots with Route 2 frontage prior to sale to other agencies, interests, or private owners.
2. The Town should aggressively enforce the provisions of the Route 2 Bypass District, a zoning ordinance that prohibits buildings, above ground structures, or parking within the district. The District is of a variable width in relation to Route 2, but generally 30 to 40 feet beyond the existing Right of Way. The Bylaw further limits each establishment to one vehicular entrance and exit per lot as existing on January 1, 1989, by special permit and only if an alternative access cannot be provided onto another Town road. Landscape buffers are to be retained.
3. The Town should undertake a planning analysis of all parcels fronting on Route 2 and identify those most likely to require direct access. The Town must continue to press MassHighway to acquire critical frontage along Route 2 to make the highway "limited access" in its entirety.
4. The Town might also consider approaching landowners such as Walden Woods, DEM, CLCT, and others to request donations of easements prohibiting access across the ByPass District.

## **5. SIGNALIZATION IMPROVEMENTS**

The CAC (and particularly the Town of Acton) continues to press for improved synchronization of streetlights between Baker Avenue and Crosby's Corner as a way to relieve some of the delay times on Route 2 during the morning and evening commute. The Town of Concord is supportive of these efforts, but stresses that the amount of "green time" available to traffic CROSSING and ENTERING Route 2 cannot at the same

time be reduced. A reduction would negatively impact commuters entering Route 2 from local streets in Concord. Many of these roads are themselves important commuting corridors. If the same amount of "green time" can be offered to cross traffic at Route 62, Sudbury Road, Old Road to Nine Acre Corner, Baker Avenue, and Route 126 while improving the traffic flows on Route 2 through sequencing, then Concord should support the initiative.

**Progress to date:** The Concord Planning Board several years ago required the developer at 300 Baker Avenue to study and implement synchronization as part of its site plan approval and traffic mitigation package for a proposed new office building. Initial work was completed, with some coordination with MassHighway. To date, the office expansion project has not moved forward due to a slow economy, so the synchronization effort is stalled. State Representative Cory Atkins requested and received a supplemental appropriation of \$350,000 several years ago to accomplish the synchronization, but this has not led to implementation of the effort.

The CAC has been told that synchronization of all five traffic signals between Baker Avenue and Crosby's Corner is not technically possible due to the separation distances and the effect of traffic "platooning" over these distances. There is also the cost of physically wiring the signals boxes. There seems to be more hope that synchronization of the three western-most lights may be possible. Some on the CAC are not convinced that synchronization will help the Route 2 backup unless substantially more "green time" is awarded to the mainline Route 2 traffic, which Concord would not support.

## **6. PARKWAY TREATMENTS**

The Route 2 Corridor in Concord is a gateway to a nationally significant cultural and historic community. Minuteman National Historic Park, the homes of the Transcendental authors, Walden Woods, and Walden Pond are part of the fabric of Concord, as are the rivers, wetlands, agricultural fields, woodlands, and vistas visible from Route 2. In all planning efforts along Route 2, the CAC has pressed for "parkway" type of treatments that will honor and preserve the rural character of Concord.

In the Crosby's Corner project, the proximity of the project segment to the nationally recognized Walden Woods and to the Battle Road led to increased leverage for parkway treatments during the FEIS/EA process. Many landscaping and parkway treatment elements were promised as mitigation in order to gain the Finding Of No Significant Impact (FONSI). The efforts of the Walden Woods Project, Minuteman National Historic Park, the Massachusetts Historic Commission, the Town of Lincoln, and the Town of Concord were instrumental in achieving these promises.

## **7. ATTENTION TO SURROUNDING LAND USE**

Much of the Route 2 Corridor in Concord from the Lincoln Town line to the Sudbury River passes through a mosaic of woods, river, floodplain, and farm fields, contained in a variety of large parcels owned by the Commonwealth, the Town, the Walden Woods

Project, the Concord land Conservation Trust, several farmers, and some private land owners. Further to the west, Route 2 provides access to Emerson Hospital and several large medical buildings in the vicinity of ORNAC and Route 62. In the vicinity of Baker Avenue, there is substantial commercial real estate. Near the Rotary, large holdings of land by the State Police and Correctional Institute dominate the surrounding land use. All along the Route 2 Corridor are strategic parcels that were purchased by MassHighway for future road improvements, including land at the signalized intersections.

The Town has a number of interests regarding land abutting Route 2. Among these are:

1. Eliminating curb cuts, avoiding future curb cuts
2. Planning for traffic flowing onto Route 2 from new or planned developments
3. Influencing the future use of Commonwealth -owned properties
4. Preserving the rural vistas along Route 2
5. Maintaining sufficient land for future highway improvements
6. Protection of historic resources, farmland, wetlands, river corridors, wildlife corridors.
7. Safe access to Emerson Hospital and related regional medical facilities
8. Future of farmstands

One of the most significant changes in public policy during the last few years is the move by the Commonwealth to sell "surplus" land for fair market value or to achieve State land use goals (see attached Boston Globe article). The Town is financially unprepared to acquire these significant properties at fair market value. Therefore, the Town should look at each parcel of State-owned land, to determine how best to respond to State surplus initiatives. Upon request of the Board of Selectmen, the Planning Board has placed a warrant article on the 2003 Annual Town Meeting agenda (Article 29) which would impose a moratorium on all real estate development and construction for parcels owned by the Commonwealth, located adjacent to Route 2, that are declared surplus. The purpose of the moratorium is to allow the Comprehensive Long Range Plan Committee sufficient time to study, plan, and implement measures for protection of municipal resources.

It would also be advisable for the Town to undertake this assessment of the Commonwealth's properties in the context of a full Route 2 corridor analysis: to study the status of all lands abutting the corridor, and to prepare for potential changes in land use.

### **PEDESTRIAN, WILDLIFE, AND BICYCLE CROSSINGS.**

Route 2 bisects Concord, separating neighborhoods and cutting off access to Town Centers for pedestrians and cyclists, and interrupting wildlife corridors. Through the CAC, the Town should continue to press for incorporation of pedestrian, bicycle, and wildlife crossings into the design of all intersections and road segments.

As mentioned above, these improvements have been advocated by Town officials for the Crosby's Corner and Rotary Project. Officials should remain attentive to ensure that the promised elements are appropriately designed and remain part of the project.

At other signalized intersections, the Town has continually focused on the dangers of pedestrian crossings. There is substantial foot traffic at several of these crossings, and there have been serious pedestrian accidents at Route 62, ORNAC, and Route 126. Town officials have pressed for better crosswalks, overpasses, and signals to protect pedestrians. Until such time as the remaining signalized intersections are rebuilt, dangerous pedestrian crossings are likely to remain. One way to address the dangers is to discourage pedestrian crossings -- at Emerson Hospital, it is helpful to have shuttle buses transporting pedestrians across Route 2. At Route 126, it is important to remain vigilant on Walden Pond parking.

#### **8. TREATMENT OF THE REMAINING SIGNALIZED INTERSECTIONS: GRADE SEPARATIONS, JUGHANDLES, PEDESTRIAN CROSSINGS, CLOSURES, ETC.**

The Town should consider whether it wishes to pursue further highway improvements at the Route 62, ORNAC, Sudbury Road, and Route 126 intersections. Now that the CAC has studied the Crosby's Corner, Rotary, and Acton interchanges, it is time to focus attention on these intersections.

A good model for this planning is the work that was done during 2002 on potential intersection changes for the Acton intersections. MassHighway and Central Transportation Planning Staff (CTPS) developed five different interchange scenarios for the Acton intersections which were then discussed at a well attended public hearing. The reaction to further improvements was very negative, and Acton has decided to press for only minor changes to the intersections.

Concord, through the CAC, could ask for similar planning for the four remaining signals, and could then evaluate whether to press for further safety improvements. Grade separations would offer many benefits to traffic flow and safety, but would dramatically change the Concord landscape. There will be some difficult tradeoffs.